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PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS: HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Written statement*/ submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[5 February 2001]

*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received in English and French from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

GE. *200'0''866*

ENG

Human Rights Defenders in Indonesia

Working conditions for human rights workers in the province of Aceh in Indonesia have progressively worsened over the last twelve months, in spite of various ceasefire agreements concluded between the Indonesian government and the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). In spite of those agreements more than 900 individuals have been the victims of politically motivated crimes of violence. The Society for Threatened Peoples condemns the human rights violations committed by both parties to the conflict. We are particularly concerned at the increasing number of violent attacks on local and foreign human rights workers and aid agency staff being carried out by members of the security forces and groups closely associated with them. In spite of countless appeals by international human rights and aid organisations the Indonesian authorities has failed to guarantee the safety of human rights workers and aid agency staff. The murder of the human rights lawyer Jafar Siddiq Hamzah, whose mutilated body was found in Medan on 5 September 2000, has provoked international concern. Human rights workers worldwide reacted with horror to the news of the murder of Professor Dr. Safwan Idris, the Principal of the official Ar Raniry Institute for Islamic Studies on 16 September 2000. Professor Idris had been appointed a member of the Independent Commission of Inquiry set up by the President of Indonesia to consider the human rights violations perpetrated by the military in Aceh. Human rights workers have been subjected to arbitrary arrest on numerous occasions and many human rights defenders have complained of threats and intimidation.

The ceasefires were intended to allow hundreds of thousands of refugees to be provided with urgently needed humanitarian relief. In response to the increasing number of attacks on the staff of humanitarian organisations international aid agencies are progressively withdrawing from the crisis zone. In August 2000 three relief workers employed by the British aid agency OXFAM were beaten up by members of the Mobile Police Brigade (Brimob). In December 2000 three relief workers employed by the Danish aid agency RATA were shot dead. The Society for Threatened Peoples appeals to the UN Commission on Human Rights to condemn the attacks on human rights workers and call upon the Indonesian government to guarantee immediately the safety of human rights workers and aid agency staff. An independent inquiry should be held into the recent attacks on human rights activists and aid agency staff and those responsible brought to account.